MR. CHAIRMAN: You have said everything ...*(Interruptions)*... Please, take your seat ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री श्रीगोपाल व्यास: महोदय, मेरा दूसरा सप्लीमेंटरी भी है।

श्री सभापति: दूसरा सप्लीमेंटरी पूछिए।

श्री श्रीगोपाल व्यास: सर, यह 30 किलोमीटर लंबा पुल भारत और श्रीलंका दोनों के बीच के समुद्र के अधिकार क्षेत्र का सवाल है। वहां पर पश्चिम से आनेवाली घुसपैठ को सरकार क्यों सहन करने जा रही है? सर, दूसरा पर्याय मानने से यह समस्याएं नहीं रहेंगी। आप इतना हठ क्यों कर रहे हैं और कम खर्चीला, सबसे सुरक्षित, श्रीलंका के साथ अच्छे संबंध रखने वाले और पश्चिम की ताकतों को आने से रोकने वाले पर्याय पर सरकार क्यों नहीं विचार कर रही है? यह मेरा दूसरा प्रश्न है।

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज: वह थोरियम पर सवाल कर रहे हैं, थोरियम पर जबाव दीजिए? ... (व्यवधान)...

डा॰ मुरली मनोहर जोशी: सर, देश की naval security खतरे में है। ...(व्यवधान)...

SHRI T.R. BAALU: First of all, please, keep the House in order...*(Interruptions)*... Whatever I say should be heard by the hon. Members...*(Interruptions)*... I have to say something...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over. Please, take you seats.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Gram Pradhan Nidhi

†*406. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are in favour providing more powers to Gram Pradhans for strengthening the Panchayati Raj;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are considering to provide "Gram Pradhan Nidhi" for Gram Pradhans for the development of villages on the lines of "MPLADS";

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Article 243 G of the Constitution enjoins State Governments to empower Panchayats through law, with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self government. In order to evolve a national consensus on the subject, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened Seven Round Tables of State Panchayati Raj Ministers with the Union Minister between July and December 2004. The Round Tables identified through consensus, the effective devolution of functions, finances and functionaries to the Panchayats as a key priority in Panchayati Raj reform. There is also consensus that such empowerment should be accompanied by the democratic functioning of Panchayats. Towards this end, Chairpersons must act as chairperson-in-council to facilitate participative decision making, with collective responsibility. Subject-related Standing Committees of the Panchayat must be activated so that all elected members of the Panchayat particpate in managing all aspects of implemention, from conception to approval, from the calling of tenders to the finalization of vendors and from supervision of on-going works to certifying the issue of utilization certificates. The Gram Sabha should be involved in every stage of the process.

(c) There is no proposal to provide Gram Pradhan Nidhi for Gram Pradhans.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) The Constitution empowers State legislatures to authorise that Panchayats to levy and collect taxes and for making grants-in-aid to Panchayats from the Consolidated fund of the States. It also enjoins that States set up State Finance Commissions to review the financial position of the Panchayats and make recommendations on the distribution of tax proceeds between the State and the Panchayats. In furtherance of these Constitutional provisions, the endeavour of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is to ensure that funds are devolved to Panchayats in a largely untied fashion, to match the devolution of activities to them. Fund transfers to Panchayats should be without delay or diversion, through providing a

separate Panchayat sector window in the budgets of State Governments. Such funds would be utilized in accordance with the collective and participative decisions of the Panchayat concerned as a whole and not be exclusively placed with the Gram Pradhans of the Panchayats.

Indian Tourists Missing in Spain

†*407. SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India-based embassy of Spain has provided any information on 140 Indian tourists that have gone missing during travel to Spain;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) While the embassy of Spain in New Delhi has not reported any such incident to this Ministry, it is understood that they have lodged an FIR with Tughlaq, Road Police Station, New Delhi on 15th March, 2007, that the Spanish Embassy had issued visas to 144 Indian nationals on the basis of documents indicating that these persons were purportedly travelling on "incentive trips" arranged by a tour operator, namely, Tanvir Tours and Travels, who had claimed that the trip was organised by an Indian cycle manufacturer, namely Hero Cycles. According to the FIR, M/s Hero Cycles, which was later contacted by the Spanish Embassy, denied any sponsorship or connection with the said incentive trip.

(c) The matter is being investigated by Delhi Police.

Sealing of Unauthorised Commercial Premises

†*408. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that sealing of unauthorised commercial premises

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.